

THE PAUSANIAS AFFAIR PROGRAMME NOTES

Pausanias and King Philip of Macedon

The Pausanias Affair centres around the events leading up to the assassination of King Philip of Macedon in 336 B.C., which resulted in the succession of Alexander the Great. Philip's death still generates controversy and speculation today, over 2,300 years later. There is no doubt that Pausanias killed Philip. It is the question "why did Pausanias kill Philip?" that has kept scholars interested for over two thousand years.

Pausanias was of formerly Royal decent from the Kingdom of Paionia, which the Macedonian's overran when Pausanias was knee high. As was common amongst young nobles in Pausanias's circumstances, he was sent to join the King's Household Companions as a teenager. It is widely rumoured that King Philip and Pausanias were lovers, perhaps some six years before the main events of the play. The King, as was his wont, soon took a new lover, Paul¹, from amongst the Household Companions, leaving Pausanias in the lurch. Pausanias, in his despair, horribly insulted Paul in front of the other Companions. Soon after this shaming, Paul sacrificed his life for Philip during a skirmish in which the King's life was supposedly in danger. Paul's friends and family (including Paul's uncle, General Attalus²) were mightily hacked off; they saw Pausanias as the cause of Paul's demise and soon took revenge on Pausanias by getting him drunk and having him raped by stable boys. Pausanias sought justice through King Philip but got no joy, perhaps because of General Attalus's increasing importance or perhaps because King Philip thought that Pausanias's humiliation with the stable boys was a just conclusion to the matter.

It seems perfectly plausible that Pausanias might have born a grudge and desire for mortal revenge against Philip for years after the above events. Indeed, Aristotle believed that this motive was the be all and end all of the matter; i.e. that Pausanias murdered Philip simply for revenge. Aristotle was Alexander's personal tutor around that time, so his opinion on the matter has some weight, although Aristotle might have had personal motives for expressing such a view while living in such an interesting time and place.

Mike Ward also injects some extra love interest (hooray). There is no historical evidence that there was a romance between Pausanias and Princess Cleopatra. Then again, there is no historical evidence directly to refute the idea, and the idea is rather a good one. This extra twist is apocryphal. Then again, the whole play is set during the period in which most of the Old Testament Apocrypha was written. This might give you some idea of the veracity of even the so called reliable histories from that period.

Intrigue and infamy

Many scholars believe that there were political machinations involved and that Pausanias was the perpetrator of a political assassination on behalf of (or in cahoots with) others. There are many fascinating possible aspects to this true story (only some are tackled directly or alluded to in the play). To quote another great classical murder victim, "infamy, infamy, they've all got it in for me"³.

¹ Paul was inconveniently named Pausanias in real life but is referred to as "the other guy" or Paul in the play to avoid confusion

² Just to add to the confusion, histories suggest that there were probably two men named Attalus, the General referred to here and the King's bodyguard who was present when Philip was killed. Mike Ward combines the two

³ Julius Caesar, as quoted in that great seminal work, Carry On Cleo

THE PAUSANIAS AFFAIR PROGRAMME NOTES

Try just a few possibilities for size:

- General Attalus and General Parmenion were in-laws, making them an enviable new alliance with King Philip which might have led to intense rivalry from many other wannabes and usetables in the Royal Household. For example, Leonnatus and Perdiccas were from other Royal branches unlikely to benefit from the new alliance. Antipatros, not seen in this play, was chief advisor to Philip until the new alliance came along. Attalus and Parmenion themselves are not above suspicion – Attalus was indeed (subsequent to the action of the play) convicted of conspiracy to murder Philip and executed. And guess who is reported to have grassed up Attalus? – Parmenion, presumably to save his own skin;
- Olympias was becoming increasingly marginalised and would have desperately sought to ensure that her son Alexander was to succeed King Philip. Philip renaming his young wife Eurydice⁴ in honour of the dynastic queen mother and giving his daughter Cleopatra's hand in marriage to Olympias' brother Andros⁵ would have looked most ominous to a political mover like Olympias;
- Alexander himself is not above suspicion of conspiracy, partly for the reasons listed above for Olympias. It is also rumoured that Alexander had a big falling out with Philip and General Attalus when Philip announced his intention to marry Eurydice. Nevertheless most scholars believe it to be unlikely that Alexander was complicit in his father's killing;
- Philip was cruising for a bruising with the Persians; many scholars believe that Pausanias might have been in the pay of Persian leaders who wanted to see the King assassinated;
- some scholars believe that the intention was to assassinate both Philip and Alexander at the same time. In the aftermath of the slaughter, two Macedonian princes, Heromenes and Arrhabeus (not characters in this play) as well as General Attalus were found guilty of conspiracy with Pausanias and executed. The Persian's might well have wanted weaker princes to take over Macedonia at that time, so Persian leaders might well have influenced those conspirators. Or perhaps the plot was an internal power struggle entirely initiated by the several Macedonians who were found guilty after the killing. Or perhaps Pausanias was simply acting alone, as Aristotle suggests, and the "conspirators" who were subsequently executed were innocents who were conveniently removed from the scene by being found guilty of conspiracy to assassinate Philip;
- several other parties were tried, found blameworthy and executed at the time, not least King Philip's astrologers (for not predicting the danger to Philip) and Pausanias's escape horses (straight up). Weird lot, those ancient Macedonians.

Women's things

As a great bard once said, "sometimes it's hard to be a woman"⁶. One of those hard times was Ancient Greece, especially at the time of Philip and Alexander. Whilst the women characters' position in the play reflects the society of the time, both Olympias and Cleopatra leave us in no doubt that they are women of a passionate and determined nature.

⁴ Eurydice was originally called Cleopatra, risking maximum confusion with King Philip's daughter of that name

⁵ Andros was named Alexander in real life but has been renamed Andros in order to avoid confusion with Alexander (the soon to be Great)

⁶ Tammy Wynette, Stand By Your Man

THE PAUSANIAS AFFAIR PROGRAMME NOTES

Cleopatra is every inch a modern woman when she shocks Alexander with declarations of her physical desire for Pausanias. This behaviour places her at the boundary of the prevailing society; Mike Ward is making it clear that she is very much her parents' daughter.

Olympias suffers the frustrations of a strong minded woman bound by the constraints of her society. Although we might not approve of all her actions, our modern attitudes allow her to draw upon our sympathies for her situation.

Ancient Greek philosophers, remembered on the whole to be an enlightened lot, found it hard to agree on the status of women. Indeed readers of a delicate politically correct disposition should skip the next two or three paragraphs. Plato quotes Meno arguing that there are several virtues, “man’s virtue lies in knowing how to administer the state, a woman’s virtue is to order her house and obey her husband”⁷. However, Plato also quotes Socrates as a believer in “one virtue and type of soul, regardless of sex. Men and women, if they are to be good men and women, must have the same virtues of temperance and justice”⁸. Plato himself argued that “a woman whose reason is strongly developed is as acceptable a candidate for the governing class as a man with similarly developed reason”⁹

Aristotle believed the Greeks to be an enlightened race because, unlike the Barbarians, the Greeks make a distinction between women and slaves¹⁰. He was enlightened, but up to a point. He was with Meno more than Plato. He also says “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind”¹¹. And again “the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority”¹². And once more “the courage and justice of a man and of a woman are not, as Socrates maintained, the same; the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying”¹³

As Aristotle was the household philosopher of the Macedonian Royals, that probably gives us a clue to the status of women in Philip’s kingdom. Indeed, it seems amazing that Olympias was such a strong character given this context. History bears out that Olympias was, for the period, a very powerful queen wielding exceptional authority in the kingdom. She basically administered Macedonia while the men were off fighting, both early in Philip’s reign and early in Alexander’s reign. After Alexander’s death, Olympias acted as regent and guardian of the young successor princes.

Men’s stuff

There are several key male-male relationships in The Pausanias Affair; in particular Philip-Pausanias, Alexander-Hephaestian and Pausanias-Hector. It is widely believed and documented that Philip’s relationships were sexual in nature, but much debated whether Alexander’s were sexual or not. Terms such as “gay”, “homosexual” and “bisexual” have only limited meaning in this context. The Ancient Greeks did not look on these matters in the same way as our society does. Relations between older men, erastes (pursuer, active

⁷ Plato, Dialogues

⁸ ibid

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ Aristotle, Politics

¹¹ ibid

¹² ibid

¹³ ibid

THE PAUSANIAS AFFAIR PROGRAMME NOTES

participant) and younger men, eromenos (pursued, passive participant) were considered normal. Relations between men of the same age and status were, on the whole, frowned upon, although some believe that such coeval relations were in vogue in Macedonia at that time.

In the play, Philip seems to find it politically expedient to encourage Alexander's companionship with young men of his own age. Philip clearly encourages Alexander's close relationship with Hephaestian, especially after Philip discovers that Olympias has become opposed to it.

Some sources say that Alexander was uninterested in women while others say that his level of interest in women was "normal" for his society (i.e. he would have perceived women as less interesting and having lower status than men, see "Women's Things" above). In the play, Olympias seems to be desperately throwing young women Alex's way, but this might be as much a rush to see him sire a possible heir as a desire to see him "go straight". Alexander had three documented wives and several reputed mistresses and/or assignations. In modern terms, he was possibly bisexual but almost certainly not homosexual.

So were Alexander and Hephaestian lovers? There are no reliable sources that cite direct evidence, so the evidence is purely circumstantial. However, the circumstantial evidence is quite compelling. Their relationship was often compared with that between Achilles and Patroklos which was assumed to be a sexual relationship. There are several passages in Curtius's histories (fairly reliable) which infer that the relationship was sexual at least at some stage. Well documented is Alexander's extreme grief when Hephaestian died, described as being like mourning a spouse.

Alexander and Hephaestian would have spent far more time with each other in their youth than either could have expected to spend with their wives, even if they had lived long lives. Also, remember that these young men were students of Aristotle, whose views on women are documented above. Aristotle describes a true friend as a "second self" and suggests that people have only "one special friend"¹⁴ (presumably a man). Such intense friendship might (or might not) have had a sexual element to it at one time, but the friendship was almost certainly the most important aspect. Ultimately, therefore, it makes little difference whether or not the Alexander-Hephaestian relationship was sexual. It is indisputable that there was an extremely strong emotional attachment between the two young men.¹⁵

Loyalty and honour

Issues around loyalty and honour arise in several aspects of The Pausanias Affair. The intrigue of the play makes the audience question almost all aspects of loyalty. For example, Olympias's exchanges with Pausanias towards the end of the first half of the play, call into question Hephaestian's loyalty to Alexander, Pausanias's loyalty to Philip and Olympias's loyalty to just about everyone. Alexander seems to remain convinced throughout the play that his entourage are unbendingly loyal to him. However, not all members of the entourage seem so convinced. Given the recorded history around this play (see "Intrigue and infamy" above) it is unsurprising that loyalty is often called into question. Loyalty was clearly often bought or swapped in that society.

¹⁴ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics

¹⁵ a key source for this "Men's Stuff" Section was the short essay on Alexander's sexuality by Dr Jeamme Reames-Zimmerman at www.pothos.co.uk

THE PAUSANIAS AFFAIR PROGRAMME NOTES

Honour was different and of crucial importance to the Ancient Greeks. Indeed Pausanias's motive for killing King Philip might well have been the simple matter of honour. When Philip forces Alex to beg for Harpalus' life, Alexander initially says "there is no honour in begging". When Alex relents, Harpalus asks Alex not to beg for him; "If you beg for me I lose my honour".

The two young men then debate whether arguments of Achilles and Sarpedon in the Iliad would have favoured Alex's begging or not. Alexander was reputed to have kept Aristotle's annotated copy of the Iliad by his bedside throughout his adult life. For what it is worth, the current author sees the arguments of the Iliad to be irrelevant to the situation Alexander and Harpalus face in the play, as in the circumstances neither is in a position to risk death by fighting for glory and honour.

What is clear is that men in Macedonian society considered their honour to be more important than their lives, which perhaps explains in part their uncanny success as a fighting force.

Alexander (the soon to be Great)

Alexander is a charismatic yet flawed character in the play. His flaws revolve mainly around "shooting from the hip" or "going off at the deep end" (to use the modern vernacular) or "cutting the Gordian knot" to use the vernacular originating from one of Alex's petulant deeds. Interestingly, some military historians suggest that his military strategies were similarly flawed, despite his success as a general. His technique, to lead from the front in a rather gung-ho manner, was not repeated by subsequent great generals (Caesar, Hannibal, Ghengis Khan all led from behind) and is seen as ill-judged by many military thinkers. Indeed, some military strategists believe that he was a lucky general who would probably have met his comeuppance had he lived long enough to need to defend his Empire. Still, Napoleon is alleged to have said that given the choice between a skilful general and a lucky general he'd choose the lucky general every time. And if Alex's success was luck rather than skill, what luck!

Even during the period of the play Alexander was emerging as a hugely successful young general. Once he became king, his success was phenomenal. He defeated King Darius III of Persia, at the time the mightiest Empire in the world, despite the fact that the Persian's had many times the number of troops available to Alexander. Alexander's untimely death at the age of only 33 is, ironically, like that of his father, the subject of speculation. He might have simply been taken ill and died, or was he poisoned? This question will almost certainly never be answered.

The death of Philip of Macedon was a defining moment in Alexander the (soon to be) Great's life. The Pausanias Affair grapples with the circumstances of Philip's death and Alexander's succession. Despite dying extremely young for a successful leader (Caesar didn't even get started until 40ish), Alexander created an empire that spread from North Africa as far as India; the largest empire the world knew until the initiation of the great Islamic empires some thousand years later. Despite the fact that Alexander's empire was short-lived (it crumbled soon after Alex's death), it without question initiated key links between east and west and thus irrevocably changed the course of history.